

**MILTON KEYNES SUPPORTING PEOPLE COMMISSIONING BODY**

**FUTURE FUNDING OF THE FURNITURE FIRST SCHEME**

**Request for funding of the Furniture First Scheme**

**Decision required regarding:**

- **Recognising that Furniture First contributes to SP priorities and the CB therefore has a role in preventing its closure**
- **Agreeing SP funding for the Furniture First Scheme from June 2007**
- **Agreeing an exception to the SP eligibility criteria to allow funding of the scheme**
- **Seeking funding from other Milton Keynes Council departments that benefit from the service**

**Background**

Furniture First was set up to meet the needs of vulnerable service users who do not have the resources to furnish their accommodation and provides second hand furniture to vulnerable service users at nil cost.

Support workers had been spending a great deal of time trying to source basic items to enable the service user to maintain their accommodation. Some service users are eligible for community care grants but these take a long time to access and do not cover the full cost of the basic items service users need.

The establishment of Furniture First not only provided service users with basic furnishings but enabled support workers to use their time with service users more effectively.

**Future Funding**

Furniture First has been funded by the Community Recycling and Economic Development programme (CRED). A further funding bid was submitted to CRED and was unsuccessful. The scheme is on a short list with CRED although there is very little expectation that they will receive any additional funding given the length of the short list.

The current funding runs out in June 2007 and if alternative funding is not identified the scheme will have to close.

**Grant conditions**

From April the local Supporting People programme will be subject to the grant conditions for excellent authorities, rather than non-excellent authorities as at

present, as a result of the local authority achieving a 3\* CPA rating. These grant conditions allow a wider definition of what may be funded referring to “welfare services” rather than “housing related support services”. Under the wider definition the Commissioning Body could choose to fund Furniture First if it was thought to contribute to the aims and objectives of the programmes as detailed in the 5 year strategy.

An exception to the local eligibility criteria would need to be made however as this service falls outside of the agreed Milton Keynes Supporting People eligibility criteria.

### **Referrals**

From January 2006 to December 2006 there have been 338 referrals from the following organisations:

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Number of referrals</b>	<b>Funding source</b>
MKC Tenancy Support	140	SP
St Christopher's The Ark Christian foundation, Women's Aid PACT Orbit	97	SP
ASCAT YOT Children services, Connexions Lighthouse Hospital SW team, Coram	55	MKC
Shelter & other	46	Other
<b>Total</b>	<b>338</b>	

<b>Household Types</b>		<b>Age Groups</b>		<b>Total number of furniture items</b>
Bedsit	11	Children	154	1892
Flat	168	16-24	186	
Small House	30	24+	59	
Large House	39	Unknown	128	
Other	6			
Unknown	84			
<b>Total</b>	<b>338</b>		<b>527</b>	<b>1892</b>

### **Running Costs**

The service has three part time staff members employed for a total of 56 hours. There is also a healthy number of volunteers. The total cost for the service is:

<b>Budget item</b>	<b>Total cost</b>
Salary costs	23,932
Vehicle costs	6,250
Overhead costs	14,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>44,682</b>

### **Future Funding**

Furniture First has been funded by CRED. The current funding runs out in June 2007. A further funding bid has gone into CRED and not been successful. The scheme is on a short list with CRED but there is very little expectation that they will receive any additional funding.

Given the contribution this service makes to the welfare of service users and the preventative agenda, in particular supporting people to maintain their independence, the Commissioning Body may wish to commit SP funding to Furniture First to secure its future.

This would require an exception being made to the local eligibility criteria although the funding would be in keeping with government grant conditions for excellent authorities.

Due to the significant financial challenge faced by the SP budget locally and the current forecast of budget deficit in 2008/9 CB members may wish to seek funds from other council budgets with housing, adult social care and children's services being the main beneficiaries. A contribution from the environment directorate might also be sought given the scheme's positive impact on the environment and reduction of waste, fly tipping of old furniture, etc.

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